

VZCZCXRO7025  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #4769/01 3640135  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 300135Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8832  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004769

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: TA'MIM PROVINCE AND KIRKUK: THE ISSUES, THE  
LEADERS, POSSIBLE STEPS AHEAD

Classified By: Classified by Robert Gilchrist, Political Counselor, for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: Kirkuk's most divisive issue in Kirkuk remains Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution which dictates that normalization, a census and a referendum on Kirkuk,s future status occur before December 31, 2007. The Kurds are pushing for the process to go forward in order to tie Kirkuk to the Kurdistan Regional Government, Arabs and Turcomen seek a delay and a power-sharing arrangement. Unemployment remains high and threatens the stability of the region. Attacks along sectarian lines occur on a regular basis, but not to the extent as in Baghdad or other provinces. The U.S. should urge a peaceful and constitutional resolution on the final status of Kirkuk. Economic and institutional development, as well as key infrastructure improvements, will also enhance stability and security. This is one of a series of cables by Regional and Provincial Reconstruction Teams analyzing the governates of Iraq. End summary.

-----  
POLITICAL ISSUES  
-----

¶2. (C) Kirkuk is divided between Sunni Arabs, Turcoman and Kurds, with a smattering of other ethnic groups, all of whom offer arguments that Kirkuk is or was historically theirs.<sup>8</sup> The prevalent spoils system of local politics makes all but the Kurds, now in political ascendancy, reluctant to become involved in any organization that they cannot control.

¶3. (C) The most divisive issue in Kirkuk centers on Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution which dictates that normalization, a census and a referendum on Kirkuk,s further status will occur before December 31, 2007. Under the former regime, Kirkuk underwent an Arabization<sup>8</sup> program which included redrawing provincial boundaries, forcing people from their homes and moving Arabs into Kirkuk. The normalization process requires rectifying these previous actions. Following normalization, a census is supposed to occur, the results of which will determine who votes in the future referendum determining Kirkuk,s final status.

¶4. (C) While many feel it will be impossible to complete normalization prior to the constitutionally-mandated December 2007 date, the Kurds are pushing for the referendum to go forward under the assumption that through population and political muscle Kirkuk will vote to join the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). As it is related to the referendum, Arabs and many Turcoman seek a delay pending a power-sharing political agreement. Some seek a special

status for Kirkuk similar to Baghdad city and some threaten violence to prevent Kirkuk,s absorpition into the KRG. Much depends on the GOI,s willingness to move the process along and many Kurds are unhappy with what they perceive as the Prime Minister,s so far tepid support for normalization and the eventual referendum.

-----  
ECONOMIC ISSUES  
-----

¶5. (C) Unemployment remains high and threatens the stability of the region. The largest employers are the Government and the Northern Oil Company (NOC). Like the rest of the country, un- and under-employed young men comprise the largest demographic group. Political power is patronage power here, and local political participation is directly linked to this dynamic. While Arabs and Turcoman have boycotted much of the local political process they have lost economic opportunities on which the Kurdish population has been quick to capitalize.

¶6. (C) The management of the Northern Oil Co. (NOC), specifically the question of who controls its hiring practices, has emerged as a major issue. NOC employment is a flash point between Arabs (seen by Kurds as Saddam-era carpet baggers) and Kurds (who have not bothered to justify the technical credentials of those it tries to muscle into oil jobs). Kirkuk, like the rest of the nation, is beset by severe power shortages and water and sanitation problems to a lesser extent. Power-free days in some neighborhoods and city-wide, multi-hour blackouts remain the norm. Corruption is prevalent. Public infrastructure remains an easy

BAGHDAD 00004769 002 OF 003

terrorist target.

-----  
SECURITY ISSUES  
-----

¶7. (C) Attacks along sectarian lines occur on a regular basis, but not to the extent as in Baghdad or other provinces. Nonetheless, Kirkuk violence is significant and has increased in frequency and ferocity since Spring 2006. While there have been several examples of mass terror here, more often there occur specifically targeted acts, like the two recent assassination attempts on the Governor. Arab Sunni insurgent and terrorist groups in Kirkuk include Ansar al-Sunna (founded by Sunni Kurds), Jaysh al-Islam and Al-Awda. The pro-Baathist Sunni areas of Hawija in the west and Riyad in the south are especially dangerous.

¶8. (C) The Shia JAM militia reportedly maintain as many as 500-600 armed followers in Kirkuk, but there has not been any violence attributed to them in the media or anecdotally among our interlocutors. The Kurdish-dominated quasi-statal secret police &Asayesh8 conduct targeted operations but

SIPDIS  
thus far have not really thrown their weight. In Kirkuk it is often difficult to differentiate criminal activity and &score settling8 from political violence in the region. However, as Kirkuk,s referendum date comes closer, the possibility exists for an intense and perhaps bloody surge as Kurds, Arabs and Turcomen look to secure the outcome in their favor through violence and intimidation.

-----  
KEY POLITICAL PLAYERS  
-----

¶9. (S-NF) Asayesh - Some point to the shadowy, 2,500-strong security/intelligence police Asayesh as the most influential agent in Kirkuk. There are actually two distinct and separate Asayesh networks in Kikruk, organized along PUK/KDP

party lines. Kirkuk Asayesh report to the most senior tier of Kurdish hierarchy. The PUK faction answers to Dr. Khasraw Gul Mohammed (PUK politburo member and Talabani acolyte), while the KDP Asayesh reports to Marour Barzani (KDP politburo member, head of KDP intelligence and son of KRG President Masud Barzani). Both groups work closely with MNFI in their counter-insurgency role, and both liaise with local police through Deputy Director General Torhan Abdul Rahman.

¶10. (C) Rizgar Ali is Chairman of the Kikruk Provincial Council. Pragmatic and charismatic, he is the quintessential Big City Boss, and arguably the most powerful man in Kirkuk. He has made efforts to reach out to the Sunni Arabs but has been disappointed with the response. His support for PRT projects has been solid. Rizgar Ali is a PUK man through and through.

¶11. (C) ACC (Arab Consultative Council) is dominated by the al-Ubaidi tribe, among whose leaders Abdul Rahman Munshid al-Assi is seen as one of the key players in Kirkuk Arab society. Boycotting Arab members of the Kirkuk Provincial Council are Rakan Saeed and Mohammed Khalil Nasif. The latter, from the Jaburi tribe, maintains close ties to the Iraqi Turcoman Front and is on the 140 Committee. That neither of them seem to hold much sway among Sunni parties in Baghdad nor engage effectively with locally powerful Kurds in Kirkuk makes them forces to work around rather than through. Meanwhile, the Shia have been notable by their absence in most Arab discussions about the future of Kirkuk, and it has been very difficult to find any member of the local community who can speak authoritatively on their behalf.

¶12. (C) Governor Abdul Rahman Mustafa is a moderate Kurd who seems to be the compromise candidate between the KDP and PUK, and as such he seems to be more a figurehead than an engine of Kurdish policy. Although deeply overshadowed by Rizgar Ali, the Governor has recently tried to take a more active leadership role and will continue to be a player, especially as a liaison and advocate for the region among extra-provincial interlocutors.

¶13. (C) Ali Mahdi is a key member of the Turcoman Ili party and a NOC oil executive on sabbatical. Mehdi is a boycotting member of the Kirkuk Provincial Council and one of the most vocal opponents of the Kurds and implementation of Article 140. Said to be funded by Ankara, Mahdi often hosts

BAGHDAD 00004769 003 OF 003

meetings with Hassan Torhan (said to be a Turcoman Islamist, affiliated with the ITF). Meanwhile, Tahseen Mohamed Ali Kahiya of the Turcoman Islamic Union, a Shia, is on the 140 Committee.

¶14. (C-NF) General Anwar is a reliable U.S. ally. He is the unrivaled Commander of Iraqi military forces in the Kirkuk region. However, the questions remain as to how influential the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) will be over time vis--vis non-statal players like the Asayesh and militias, and how effective a force ISF will continue to be in a scenario that involves the diminution of direct U.S. military involvement.

-----  
POSSIBLE STEPS FORWARD  
-----

¶15. (C-NF) The key to U.S. influence on the primary issue in Kirkuk -- namely the final status of the province -- is at the national level in Baghdad and the regional level in Erbil, to be followed up locally with the Kurdish Brotherhood List. It appears likely that Kirkuk Kurdish leadership and their satellites will fall into line with decisions made by higherups. Likewise, our standing with Sunni Arabs and other groups here is a product of our national stature, not the other way around. So goes Baghdad and the Shia and Arab sense of our fair play, so goes our effectiveness among those groups here. We should assiduously guard our role in Kirkuk

as an &honest broker.<sup>8</sup>

¶16. (C-NF) We should also vocally support the constitution, publicly and privately, and support Iraqi efforts to define how the constitution should be interpreted and applied. In terms of non-military U.S. staffing and resources at the provincial level, our focus must be on developmental inputs in areas of fundamental importance in the province: security and infrastructure. U.S. capacity-building efforts in the North should focus on core missions like power generation/distribution and clean water and sanitary services.

¶17. (C) On security, it is important we continue progress in training and helping professionalize the police and security forces. As Iraqi forces undertake more responsibility for their own security (and in the Kirkuk context, evidence suggests that they are), our forces (as well as our politics) could serve as a QRF, cordoning off as much as possible against outside interference.

¶18. (C) &Softer,<sup>8</sup> political capacity-building activities, including trade shows, job creation schemes, women and minority contact groups, political workshops, should be designed carefully to include all ethnic groups. It is also important to recognize that Kirkuk, as a multi-ethnic border town, will always remain a fault line within Iraq,s political life, regardless of its final status.  
SCOBey